

# MGWA MINUTES

Minnesota Ground Water Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Regular monthly meeting

**Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 28, 2023**

**Location:**

- Meeting was called to order at 8:06 AM. The meeting was held as an online Teams meeting.

**Attendance:**

- Jere Mohr, Past President; Sandeep Burman, President; Rebecca Higgins, President-Elect; Michael Ginsbach, Secretary; Eric Bunge, Treasurer; Jennie Leete, Management; Sean Hunt, Management; Sherri Kroening, Newsletter

**Agenda:**

- Burman will email the updated agenda to the Board to confirm that all board members will have access. No additional updates to the agenda.
- Burman asked if the May 2023 minutes had been updated. Ginsbach asked Higgins and Kroening about the correct spelling of the new members of the White Paper Committee. Kroening provided an the correct spelling, which Ginsbach made in the draft minutes. Burman motioned to approve the draft minutes, seconded by Mohr. Draft minutes approved.

**Jeff Stoner CWC Letter Update:**

- Per Burman, Jeff Stoner was not selected to the CWC. The group that was elected is a new group, Northern Forest Committee. Burman said that Stoner is still interested in potentially joining as a member in the future.
- Kroening, Higgins, and Burman all noted that there was not much information about the new group that was appointed to the CWC.

**Membership drive ideas and potential action items:**

- Burman reminded the Board that this topic was related to how to boost membership numbers to what we had seen pre-COVID.
- Hunt suggested a “lost and found” to help with membership retention. He said that when members change jobs or retire, their email addresses or physical mailings might be rejected. Hunt said that this idea was to have a listing of these rejections so current MGWA members can help with identifying updated points of contact for these members.

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- Hunt suggested that this could be on the MGWA website; Burman agreed and suggested that it could also be beneficial to have this in the newsletter. Kroening said that it would be relatively easy to add to the quarterly newsletter. Hunt also suggested that it could be “where are they now” instead of “lost and found”.
- Kroening suggested that the Board could share other potential benefits for being an MGWA member aside from the conference registration.
- Higgins asked if the Board is looking to get the levels to a comfortable level and call it good enough or if there is interest in growing the membership beyond historic levels. She notes that if MGWA is looking to grow substantially, the Board may need to look beyond what had been done historically. Higgins notes that it might be beneficial to reach out to new folks in the field to see what they would like to gain from MGWA. She suggests that these newer professionals could be surveyed to see if they were interested in more trainings or more in-person events. She also suggested seeing if the newer professionals might want additional resources from MGWA.
- Higgins said that it might be good to focus beyond existing members and try to see how we could expand the membership beyond those who have not been members in the past or are new. She suggests that there might be a need for a fee-based event that could prove to be beneficial to improving the number of new members.
- Burman said that, in his mind, this is a long-term effort to ensure that the organization continues to be viable and is able to continue to advocate for groundwater issues. Burman said that the numbers do matter if the MGWA is trying to represent the thoughts of the professional community. He said that recent efforts by the MGWA to work along with additional private well testing have been incredibly helpful. Burman stated that MGWA is a broad coalition of private, public, and academic groups so it represents a large swath of the professionals.
- Burman also notes that recent legislative sessions have been interested in getting the opinions of the professional communities in addition to the agencies.
- Higgins echoes Burman’s comments and notes the importance of ensuring that membership numbers stay high.
- Burman agrees with what both Hunt and Higgins stated and emphasizes the importance of both bringing back previous members and encouraging new members. He said that he meets with new employees at his agency to get their perspective on their needs and things to improve retention. Burman said this likely also applies to organizations and notes that the new employment paradigm might not emphasize the importance of joining an organization. He said that he tries to get his new staff involved with organizations and there is a big of a gap about what the organizations can provide to new professionals.
- Burman stated that surveying current members may not help us get new members but it could be beneficial to survey the current members about what new staff are looking for and how we can best appeal to these new staff.
- Higgins asked about potentially completing an outreach campaign with representatives of groups that are involved in MGWA - private sector companies and the agencies. Higgins suggested that there might be people in those groups who may be able to share additional insight into how to appeal to the new hires and what the hiring staff in these groups would like their new hires to learn. Higgins said that this would be a high level approach and would mirror the more grass-roots approach of asking the membership.

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- Burman said that the Minnesota chapter of AIPG runs a number of social events - field trips, golfing events, etc. Burman said that these are well attended and suggested MGWA could potential follow a similar model.
- Higgins said that there AIPG does not have any family events and that this is an opportunity. She suggests that if there would be an event that could be planned that could be family friendly it may be more well attended. Higgins said that is a barrier to her attending events. Kroening said that she agrees and had similar issues when she had young children.
- Kroening said that it could be a lunch event. Higgins suggested that it could be tied in to a farmer's market - this could help with parking and offer an additional incentive to attend. She said that this could entice people to attend other than just attend an MGWA meeting. Kroening said that having it be amenable to families with children could also help as well. She also noted that the previous social coordinator had to step down due to obligations with their young children. Higgins agrees and said this could be a big issue for newer, younger professionals in the field.
- Burman noted that there are career fairs at the local universities and MDH has a booth there to talk to soon-to-be college graduates. He suggests that MGWA could potentially have a booth as well and that even if the students do not join MGWA it increases awareness of the organization. Burman said he will get an update from the University of Minnesota Earth Sciences for the next career fair. He said that while there are costs associated with having a booth at the fair it could be a great opportunity to both increase awareness and find out more information about what new professionals might be interested in. Burman stated that connecting with at least one group of students would be beneficial.
- Mohr and Kroening agree that this could be a good idea. Kroening also noted that she is not sure if there is information shared with students about the benefits of joining and volunteering with a professional organization.
- Higgins said that she was made aware of MGWA when she joined a state agency and it was part of the culture. She said that because new staff may not be in person as often so that cultural push may not be there with new staff and that finding a way to encourage this would be beneficial. Higgins asked about additional in-person opportunities that might be shorter, such as a targeted training or events. She said that having these trainings close to the noon hour could be beneficial and offer either a lunch or the opportunity to go to lunch together. Higgins suggested utilizing some of the agency hands on displays as part of a family/in-person social event.
- Mohr said that having a short field trip or a visit to a site might be beneficial for this shorter event. Kroening said that it could also be career related or groundwater related. Higgins, Kroening, and Burman all suggested something like visiting the City of Minneapolis water treatment plant.
- Burman suggested that a small scale social event this fall. Burman suggested looking at what AIPG does once a quarter to ensure that people keep in touch. He also said that these events should be strategic and not just one-time events. Burman thinks that the Board should commit to a two-year strategic plan to try and increase membership numbers.
- Burman said that two relatively easy things to do would be the career fair booth and getting the "where are they now" on the website or in the newsletter.

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### NE MN monitoring Wells

- Burman asked Kroening to provide an update about a meeting that happened with USGS yesterday. Kroening said that there were members of the US Forest Service, MGS, MDH, UMN, and MPCA along with USGS.
- Kroening said that there was a special use permit for Twin Metals to install wells in the surficial sand and gravel and some wells in the bedrock. She said that as part of the special use permit the wells would need to be sealed but someone from Twin Metals reached out to the USGS to see if the wells could remain.
- Kroening said that the main purpose of the meeting was to see if there was any group that could take ownership of the wells to allow them to remain. Kroening said that MDH, MGS, and UMN stated that they generally do not take ownership of the wells. Kroening said that there are additional caveats to another organization taking ownership of these wells, as the US Forest Service's conditional use permit is unable to be transferred to another entity. She also noted that there may be an opportunity for another group to take ownership but still require Twin Metals to pay to see the wells.
- Kroening said that the conditional use permit expires at the end of the year and Twin Metals is planning to seal the wells.
- Mohr asked if the wells could be left in place for future use if they were transferred to another entity. Kroening said that this is a potential option and notes that there has been a lot of money spent to install these wells so it may be good to continue to use them.
- Higgins said that she is concerned with the costs of potentially sealing the wells and that MGWA may not have the funds to pay for the sealing. Kroening said she surprised that MGWA was even offered as a potential new owner for the wells.
- Kroening said it was not useful for the DNR's ambient study but it may be useful for a county atlas study but the timing may be off.
- Mohr said that unless the requirement to seal them in two months could be waived, it is not beneficial. Kroening said that their policy is to remove things like this once the conditional use permit is expired.
- Ginsbach noted there are some MPCA Site Assessment sites in the vicinity and asked for additional information related to the locations. Kroening will send those to Ginsbach to share with the program.
- Higgins said that taking ownership of other entities' wells is a challenge based on her experience.
- Board agreed to pass on this. Sherri will follow-up with Mindy Erickson accordingly.

### July meeting options:

- Typically take a break for summer. Skip July or August meeting?
- Burman suggested a more informal in-person meeting in late July.
- Higgins recommends sending out Doodle Poll to identify dates in July and skipping the August meeting.
- Board agreed to skip the August meeting and then be back online/virtual for the September meeting.
- Hunt suggests holding the September meeting earlier in the month to allow for Fall conference coordination. Burman will propose a new date.

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### Reports:

- Treasurer (Bunge) - will add financials to meeting notes after he has a chance to review the details
- Bunge shared Ham Lake area well interference investigation:  
[https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt\\_section/blaine-ham-lake-well-interference.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/blaine-ham-lake-well-interference.html)
- Management Team (Hunt and Leete) - Foundation approved paying printing costs for MNWOO brochures at their meeting earlier this month, invoice has been paid
- Newsletter (Kroening) - June newsletter was sent out, gearing up for next newsletter, Sherri will schedule next team meeting
- White Paper Committee (Higgins) - Higgins suggests that Michael provides White Paper Committee update at next meeting because he is on the team actively working on the current White Paper.
- Education Committee (Mohr) - Education Committee met on June 12th, Mohr was in attendance. Topics discussed included:
  - Upcoming E-STEM workshops that Ed. Comm. is assisting with - several coming up this summer. Attendance levels have been variable and committee discussed ways to better promote these moving forward.
  - Upcoming MNWOO clinics in next several months - Pope County, Duluth area, Twin Cities metro area, Kimball. Burman asks how the upcoming clinics will be promoted. Mohr indicated that emails have typically gone out from MGWA to request volunteers. Hunt indicated that Jeff Stoner asked about updating the MGWA website with clinic dates but has not provided dates yet.
  - Foundation board approved funding for increased printing costs for MNWOO brochures.
- MGWA Foundation (Mohr) - Foundation met on June 8th, Mohr was in attendance. Topics discussed included:
  - Field camp award - Foundation decided that they intend to award two field camp awards in 2023 and discussed next steps for moving application and selection process forward quickly to allow for awards to be granted prior to start of U of M hydro field camp
  - Foundation board approved funding for increased printing costs for MNWOO brochures.
  - Advertising/exhibitors at Fall conference. Mohr provided update to Foundation on previous MGWA board discussions around online advertising opportunities and indicated that MGWA board did not intend to pursue those at this time. This led to a discussion of exhibitors at the Fall conference and Foundation board indicated that they would be supportive.
  - MGWA board discussed and supports pursuing making arrangements to have the opportunity for exhibitors at Fall conference. WRI will gather details from venue and provide information at September board meeting. If input or information is needed prior to September meeting, WRI will communicate with board via email and/or discuss at in-person July meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned: 9:37 am.**

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### Action Items:

- Burman will schedule July meeting based on responses to online poll.

### Next Meeting:

- In-person - date and location TBD based on responses from online poll that Higgins set up.